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THE CHICAGO EMPLOYMENT AGENCY AND THE IMMIGRANT WORKER

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The importance of the employment agency in the industrial or economic adjustment of the immigrant became apparent with the first work undertaken by the recently formed League for the Protection of Immigrants. Ignorant of our language, the country, and the American standard of wages, and compelled by his poverty to accept the first possible work, the immigrant is especially defenseless when he offers himself in the labor market. At no time does he need disinterested guidance and help more than in securing his first work, and yet he is dependent in most cases upon the private employment agent and he becomes, because of his ignorance and necessities, a great temptation to an honest agent and a great opportunity to an unscrupulous one. For this reason an investigation of Chicago agencies was made in order to determine what kinds of work may be obtained by the immigrant man or woman through this means, in what ways they are exploited, and what changes in the laws are necessary to reduce such exploitation to a minimum. According to the statement of the Commissioner of Labor, through whose department agencies are licensed, there were 289 licensed agencies in Chicago in June, 1908. Of this number 178 were investigated and 110 of them were found to make a specialty of placing foreigners. All the agencies in the neighborhood of any of our foreign colonies

were visited and also those in the down-town district so that it is believed that the 110 agencies visited are the only ones in the city which handle immigrants in any large numbers. Of these fifty-six furnished work for men, thirty-three for women, and twenty-one for both men and women. As the conditions and difficulties of the immigrant man and woman are quite different their relation to the employment agent must be separately considered. So far as the women are concerned, the kinds of work offered are few and there is very little financial exploitation as the following table shows:

TABLE SHOWING KIND OF WORK SUPPLIED IMMIGRANT WOMEN BY CHICAGO EMPLOYMENT AGENCIES

	Agencies Supplying Women Only	Agencies Supplying both Men and Women	Total
Number of agencies offering housework...	28	..	28
Number of agencies offering hotel or restaurant work.....	18	17	35
Number of agencies offering factory work	4	5	9
	50	22	
Agencies counted twice.....	17	1	
Total number of agencies.....	33	21	54

TABLE SHOWING FEES CHARGED IMMIGRANT WOMEN BY CHICAGO EMPLOYMENT AGENCIES

No. of agencies charging from \$0.50 to \$1.00	15
No. of agencies charging \$1.50 to \$2.00	25
No. of agencies charging \$3.00	3
No. of agencies charging a per cent. of wages	8
	51
No. of agencies supplying women in which fees were not ascertained	3
Total number of agencies	54

The immigrant girl then usually pays the agent less than two dollars in contrast, as will be shown later, with the immigrant man who usually pays from three to fourteen dollars. The work offered her is almost without exception hotel or housework, so the small army of foreign girls at work in the stockyards and at the various clothing trades in the city must secure their posi-

tions through other means. The mistresses of the better homes want girls who can speak English and furnish references, so the best places are not open to the immigrant. German and Scandinavian girls, however, because they are known to be excellent servants and because servants are difficult to secure, can often get good places although they are ignorant of the language. The Norwegian and Swedish National Societies both maintain employment agencies which place to good advantage many of the Scandinavian girls. The German girls are also well looked after by their friends. The Jewess will not go into service and the Italians are not adapted to housekeeping so the largest number placed by the private employment agents are either Poles or Bohemians and for this reason they are usually found in the neighborhood of these colonies. The restaurant or hotel work offered the immigrant girl means dishwashing or cleaning, for which she is paid from sixteen to twenty-five dollars a month and board; for housework she can get from twelve to twenty dollars a month and has board and room furnished her.

No direct evidence of the moral exploitation of the immigrant girl was secured, although there is reason to believe that there is in a few instances actual co-operation between the agent and the keeper of the house of prostitution. Undoubtedly the crusade against the so-called "White Slave Traffic" conducted by the federal authorities last summer, the prosecutions under the new "Pandering Law" which went into effect last July, and a few suits against employment agents for this offence—all of which were given much newspaper notoriety—made the agents cautious. Still we found several that were most suspicious and several more that make a practice of sending girls to cook and wash dishes in saloons and two cases which have come to the attention of the League this summer would indicate that the many forms of vice connected with some of our saloons make them as dangerous to the simple-minded and ignorant foreign girl as a house of prostitution. In most cases the agent who places women is herself a woman; her office is also her kitchen or her parlor¹; the

¹Out of the thirty-three agencies supplying women which were visited, twenty-seven were in family living rooms.

place is usually dirty and almost without exception unbusiness-like. But so far as the agent goes, her commonest offense is a careless disregard of the character of the places to which she sends a girl rather than an active connivance in her ruin. The problem, then, so far as the immigrant girl is concerned, is to secure for her work where she will be morally protected, work which is congenial, and in which she will learn English and become rapidly Americanized. So long as there is the unique situation of an overdemand and undersupply of houseworkers, such as exists nowhere else in the labor market, she always has this work to fall back on.

With the immigrant man the situation is much more difficult. He finds himself much handicapped when he tries to obtain work in the country in which he has been led to believe work is most abundant. In the first place, because of his ignorance of English and consequent inability to give or receive directions he cannot work without an interpreter. Interpreters can be profitably employed only when large groups of immigrants work together. Such groups are employed by the foundries, at the stock yards, in mines, on railroad, car-line and building construction, in the harvest fields, in ice and lumber camps, and other similar kinds of work. Much of this work is seasonal and is located at a great distance from the city. A large number of men are needed for a few months or weeks to harvest Dakota crops, to build a railroad in Wyoming or Arkansas, to harvest ice in Minnesota, to pick Michigan berries, and to work in the oyster beds of Maryland. This work is most undesirable. The pay is not good—during the past summer agencies were offering from \$1.25 to \$2.00, usually \$1.40, a day. Board is expensive and poor in quality and the work lasts usually only a very short time. Worse than this, the men must come back to Chicago to get their next work, so return railroad fare must be counted on. Such work, because of its undesirability, can usually be obtained. The American workman does not want it because it places him at the mercy of contractors and employment agencies and makes of him a homeless wanderer. It is work the immigrant can do and, because in most cases he must have work immediately, he takes it gladly.

This means that whatever his training or experience may be he must serve an apprenticeship in the ranks of the unskilled seasonal laborers. That this is the cause of the existence of the men's immigrant agencies is shown by the following figures as to the kind of work offered by the men's agencies studied:

TABLE SHOWING KIND OF WORK OFFERED IMMIGRANT MEN BY CHICAGO EMPLOYMENT AGENCIES

	Agencies which Supply Men Only	Agencies which Supply Men and Women	Total
Number of agencies offering "gang work"	49	3	52
Number of agencies offering restaurant or hotel work.....	2	15	17
Number of agencies offering factory work	2	6	8
Number of agencies offering "city jobs" ..	8	..	8
	61	24	85
Number of agencies counted twice.....	5	3	8
Total number of agencies.....	56	21	77

"Gang" work during the past summer was construction work outside of Chicago or farm work. The "city jobs" were tearing down buildings and odd jobs on the railroads or in cleaning buildings. It is most significant that the only kind of work offered by 68 per cent. of the agencies handling immigrants is at a distance of from about a hundred to a thousand miles from Chicago and is work which from its very nature is sure to be of short duration. Chicago is apparently a clearing-house for the seasonal laborers of the country and the proper handling of them is a problem which needs much attention. This is not a question that concerns the immigrant alone. Because of their return to Chicago to secure their next work there are always large numbers of unskilled laborers in the city who in prosperous times keep down the price paid this class of workers in and around Chicago and in times of distress and unemployment become a great burden to Chicago's charitable organizations.

Men are employed for this kind of work not as individuals, but in groups of thirty or more, and are sent to parts of the country of which they are entirely ignorant. If the employment agent were honest, philanthropic, and intelligently interested in

the men, the situation would be difficult and discouraging enough for those who are anxious to see the immigrant adjusted to his work with the least possible loss to himself and the community. The state of Illinois maintains free employment agencies. There are three in the city of Chicago. But these are little or no help to the immigrant. The superintendent of the south-side office, who also has charge of the inspection of private agencies, says the state agencies cannot place these groups of seasonal workers because they have no fees to divide with contractors and because the funds at their disposal are inadequate. To handle this kind of work successfully, interpreters are required, someone must accompany the men to the place of work, and often the railroad fare must be advanced. For this, the free employment agencies have no funds, they say.

There are several agencies maintained by philanthropic organizations in Chicago which charge only a nominal fee or none at all—one, a Jewish charity, helps in finding city work; the Scandinavians do this and in addition send a good many out of the city to work for Swedish or Norwegian farmers—but none of them handle seasonal workers. As a result the immigrant is entirely dependent on the private employment agent whose business standards are none too high and who employs as an interpreter a man who has learned a little about our language, and in the school of experience all about our methods of defrauding the foreigner, and believes that he is employed to see that the system is perpetuated. Opposite the Union Station on Canal Street from Adams to Madison and from Canal to Clinton on Madison, there is a succession of employment agencies, saloons, cheap lodging-houses, lunch-rooms, and cheap or second-hand clothing stores. These three blocks are the seasonal labor exchange of Chicago. At any time of the day and until late at night, groups of foreigners may be seen in front of these agencies, and signs offering work in South Dakota, Ohio, or Wyoming are displayed the year round. Most of the other immigrant agencies are along Milwaukee Avenue or in other neighborhoods where our foreign colonies live. The facts of interest connected with their location are shown in the following table:

TABLE SHOWING LOCATION OF CHICAGO EMPLOYMENT OFFICES WHICH PLACE IMMIGRANT MEN

	Agencies which Supply Men Only	Agencies which Supply both Men and Women	Total
Number of agencies near saloons and cheap lodging houses.....	14	1	15
Number of agencies near saloons only.....	9	3	12
Number of agencies in saloons	2	..	2
Number of agencies in family rooms.....	5	3	8
Number of agencies in steamship and banking offices.....	14	..	14
Number of agencies located elsewhere.....	12	14	26
Total number of agencies.....	56	21	77

The employment agent is prohibited by law from conducting his business "in or in connection with any place where intoxicating liquors are sold"² but 45 per cent. of the immigrant men's agencies are either above, below, or next door to a saloon as the table given above shows. The fact that 25 per cent. were managed by steamship agents or foreign banks is also significant of the probable existence of the padrone system. Agents supplying women workers very often make the family kitchen or sitting-room serve as an office, but this is seldom the case with agents supplying men. A few men in the foreign colonies are licensed but have no offices. They work on a commission for an office on Canal or Madison Streets usually and collect "gangs" of their fellow countrymen. Banks and steamship agents are often in the same way neighborhood agents for some down-town office.

Forced to obtain work through the private employment agent the immigrant usually suffers in one of three ways: (1) he is over-charged for the services rendered; (2) the work obtained is not as represented by the agent either in character, permanency or remuneration; (3) he fails to get work or the work lasts only a few days leaving him at an enormous distance from the city labor markets.

The maximum "registration fee" which the employment agent may charge is fixed by statute at two dollars. This term

² Illinois; Law of May 11, 1903, sec. 9.

is not defined by the law but it is interpreted by the Attorney-General,³ as it would undoubtedly be by the courts, as in no way limiting the right of private contract. This means an agent may charge any amount for a particular job and as the registration system is practically never used by agents supplying unskilled workers the statutory provision is no protection to the immigrant. An investigator who represented himself to be a man who collected "gangs" was told frankly, "We charge all we can get."

Fees are higher when the applicant is unable to speak English. In several cases the investigator was offered the same job for two or three dollars less than was demanded of the man who was ignorant of our language. For this reason it is impossible to say with any accuracy what fees are charged, but the following table gives what was asked of our investigators and shows the general range of fees and the higher rates for men:

TABLE SHOWING FEES ASKED OF INVESTIGATORS BY EMPLOYMENT AGENTS

	Men	Women	Total
Number of agencies charging \$0.50 to \$1.00.....	..	15	15
Number of agencies charging \$1.00-\$2.00.....	13	25	38
Number of agencies charging \$2.00-\$3.00.....	..	3	3
Number of agencies charging \$3.00-\$5.00.....	23	..	23
Number of agencies charging \$6.00-\$10.00.....	12	..	12
Number of agencies charging \$11.00-\$14.00.....	3	..	3
Per cent. of wages.....	..	8	8
Number of agencies in which fees were not learned	51 8	51 ..	102 8
Total number of agencies.....	59	51	110

The agent usually promises a "steady job" even when he is speaking of work which from its very nature cannot last more than a few weeks or a month or two. The wage promised in nearly every case was less than two dollars a day. All things considered then, it seems very clear that the service rendered is not worth the price paid, and yet it is the only way by which the men can get work. In many cases the fee includes railroad fare. What this amounts to is difficult to determine. The agent always

³ Opinion given the Commissioners of Labor by the Attorney General on May 13, 1908.

gets reduced rates or, when the work is in connection with a railroad, the men are shipped free. How much is railroad fare and how much the agent's fee never appears on the receipt the men receive. In many cases it is divided between the agent and the contractor. Fourteen agents said they had arrangements of this sort with contractors. An agent who sent fifty Bulgarians to work near Springfield claimed that one-half the six-dollar fee was railroad fare. The men failed to get work and in a hearing before the Commissioners of Labor the fact was brought out that one hundred and fifty dollars had gone, not to the company, but to the company's contractors. We have said the fee was too large even if work which lasts a few weeks or months is secured on the terms promised, but too often this is not the case. Several concrete cases which have come to the attention of the League since its very recent formation will illustrate this. During the past year a railroad has been building from Searcey in north-central Arkansas to Leslie, about ninety miles farther west. Great numbers of men were sent from Chicago to Leslie to work on this road. We found two groups who had been there. One of these was made up of Hungarians. There were fifty-three men and two women—one of these had a baby—who expected to act as cooks for the gang. They were shipped April 14, by a Chicago agent, through a St. Louis agent. They paid the Chicago agent fourteen dollars apiece and were promised steady work at \$1.40 a day. When they reached Leslie this is what happened, according to the story told by the men. They were told that the work was twenty-five miles from there. They walked to this place but the foreman only laughed at them and said he had no work for any such number. He finally put to work fifteen men and the woman who was unencumbered with the baby. The rest were told there would be work for them later on but they were without money or food and so could not stay. They started to walk back to Chicago where more such jobs are always to be had! At the end of the third day the woman gave out and the men pooled their money and sent her home on the railroad. Then they scattered so as to find work on the way. Two of them were shot

by the police in St. Louis and when last heard from were in a hospital there. The rest of them eventually reached Chicago.

This was the story one of the men told an investigator in answer to a question as to whether the agency which shipped them was not the best place to get jobs. The story was told not with any hope of getting back their money but to warn a fellow workman. It seemed as though it must be true so an effort was made to have the fees paid the agent refunded. The agent denies that the men could not get work and in attempting to learn the facts, we came to appreciate how helpless the immigrant is who has risked all his money to get work and is sent to a remote and isolated part of the country where no one understands his language or cares about his difficulties. We wrote to various people about these Hungarians but were unable to learn anything definite. The contractor assured us that though the men were moved on from one place to another they were all eventually offered work but refused because they objected to being separated. This the men denied, but at such a distance from Searcey they were unable to prove their story.

We found, however, another agent had shipped about five-hundred men to Searcey during the winter, but said, "You cannot get men to go there now because other agents sent too many men and they did not get jobs." A third agent offered, in July after the contractor in a letter written July 21 had assured us that all the men who came had been "put to work and kept to work as long as they would stay, or *until the work was finished a few weeks ago*," to send thirty men a week to Leslie for fifteen dollars apiece. Eighteen Bulgarians were sent there early in the spring, ten were given work and the others walked back to Chicago. These were the ones we learned about. How many of the hundreds of men sent down there during the winter and spring "walked back" one cannot say.

Ten Polish laborers from one house on the west side went to Wyoming last winter expecting to work in a lumber camp. They paid an agent ten dollars apiece. When they were put off the train in Wyoming they found no work of the character described but were given work for a short time on the railroad. Then

they started to walk back. One of the men, a bright young fellow of twenty-two, froze his foot. With no money to pay for a doctor for treatment and compelled to walk on, when he finally reached Chicago blood poisoning had set in and it was necessary to amputate the foot. Although crippled for life, he feels not so much resentment against the agent who sent him as shame that he should have been so ignorant of the climate of Wyoming and humiliation that he should have proved such an easy victim. This is one of the most pathetic things in connection with the work. The men are ashamed to tell their story. "Everyone cheats a greenhorn," they say, and want to hide, from those who are anxious to help them, what they consider a reflection on their intelligence.

We had other cases of the same sort. Fifty Bulgarians, already referred to, failed to get work and walked back from near Springfield, and fourteen Macedonians had the same experience at Winchester, Illinois. A Jewish carpenter was sent to Nebraska expecting to work at his trade. When he reached his destination he found that the work was digging trenches, that he had to stand in water all day long, and that the wages were \$2.00 instead of \$2.75 a day. He left his wife and children in Chicago and does not know whether to walk back or continue to do work which will eventually leave him sick and stranded at a distance from his relatives and friends.

For any of these men to get work without first returning to Chicago, is practically impossible. There probably is work near where they are left in Wyoming, Arkansas, or Nebraska, but they have no means of knowing where it is to be found. Unable to speak English and with no funds to live on temporarily, they are afraid to go farther in search of work. It is little to be wondered at that they are homesick and discouraged and anxious to get back to their friends in the city. The law provides redress for such breaches of contract, but the civil courts are not available for men who are without money or friends. The risks anyone would run in dealing with such men as most of the employment agents are would be great enough, but for men who know nothing of our language, who cannot give accurate ac-

counts of where they have been because of their ignorance of the country, who do not understand what is told them when they reach their place of destination, the risks are enormous. The agent, on the other hand, takes few chances when he sends men out to jobs that do not exist because they are so defenseless.

This situation is important because it is not the result of a temporary economic condition. Seasonal work must be done in the United States. Men must be sent from one part of the country to another and the foreign workman or American laborer who is already down and needs assistance and protection from the community is the one who will continue to do it. The work cannot easily be made attractive or desirable, but some system of handling these men honestly must be devised. This study of employment agencies has given only a superficial insight into a much larger problem of American industrial life, but from the employment-agency end, conditions can be improved by some immediate practical measures which will assist in putting this work on the proper basis.

To do this the employment agency law must be changed. While the fee cannot, under our judicial interpretation of the constitutional guarantee of the right of private contract, be fixed by law as it is in many states, publicity of fees can be required. This is done in Pennsylvania by requiring the agency to file with the Director of Public Safety, who in that state is in charge of the enforcement of the employment agency law, a list of fees he intends to charge, and a similar list must be posted in his office—to exceed this published list is an offense under the law.⁴ All division of fees with contractors or employers generally should be forbidden.⁵

Then, too, the contracts on which the men are sent out should be more specific. The law requires that "a receipt shall be given in which shall be stated the name of the applicant, the amount of the fee, the date, and the name or character of the

⁴ *Pa. Laws of 1907*, Act No. 90, sec. 8.

⁵ This is done in the following states: *New York Laws*, 1906, ch. 327, sec. 5; *Pa. Laws*, 1907, Act No. 90, sec. 8; *Colo.*, 3 *Mills, Revised Statutes*, 1737 (f); *Iowa Title*, XII, chap. 8 of the code.

work or situation to be procured.”⁶ The receipt usually contains, as a matter of fact, the name and address of the agency, the name of the applicant, the amount of the fee, the place of work—address only—and the wages to be received. Something more elaborate is sometimes given the leader or interpreter for the gang, but he is not always to be trusted, so that the individual man knows really nothing about what he is doing and has in his receipt little proof of the promises made him. Pennsylvania requires that each applicant for work outside the city shall have furnished him a written agreement in a language he understands showing name and address of the employer, name and address of the employee, nature of work, i.e., hours of labor and wages, destination and terms of transportation.⁷ New York requires that this information shall be given the employee and in addition that a copy of the contract shall be filed with the Mayor inside of five days.⁸ Wisconsin provides that the employee must have a written statement showing rate of wages, kind of work, permanency and the full name and address of the person authorizing his employment.⁹ Such a contract in the hands of the men who are sent out from Chicago would give better grounds for action if conditions were not as represented and should therefore make the agent more cautious.

The Illinois law is also inadequate in its provisions for refunding fees. The “registration” fee, it provides, is good for thirty days; if no work is obtained in that time it must be returned provided demand for it is made within thirty days after the expiration of the first period.¹⁰ We have said before that the registration system is little used, practically not at all by the class of laborers of whom we are speaking. When a specific arrangement is made to get some particular work and the work is not obtained the money should be refunded immediately or,

⁶ Illinois; Law of May 11, 1903, sec. 9.

⁷ *Pa. Laws of 1907*, Act No. 90, sec. 9.

⁸ *N. Y. Laws of 1906*, chap. 327, sec. 5.

⁹ *Wisc. Laws of 1899*, chap. 213, sec. 4.

¹⁰ *Illinois Laws of 1903*, sec. 9 of “An Act Relating to Employment Offices and Agencies.

for the convenience of the agent, inside of a few days at the latest. To require a man to wait thirty days is a great hardship. Moreover, no provision is made for refunding any part of the fee when the work is temporary in character. Boston requires that two-fifths of the fee must be returned if a man is discharged within ten days;¹¹ New York, three-fifths, if discharged within three days¹²; Pennsylvania provides that if the work does not last more than one month the fee shall not exceed 10 per cent. of the salary received;¹³ and Maine provides that if the applicant is discharged without fault on his part the fee must be returned.¹⁴ Illinois needs some such provision as these since this is the only way by which arrangements between contractor and employment agent, according to which men are regularly laid off and new men sent by the agent are given their places so that the agent collects fees for the same job again and again, can be prevented. Under the present law, if a man could prove that he was the victim of such a system he could undoubtedly secure the repayment of his fee, but the man usually does not realize what is taking place at the time of his discharge and he can, moreover, easily be charged with incompetency and so is defenseless. To prevent the system by making temporary employment of men unprofitable to the agent is the only sure remedy.

When a man is sent out of town and fails to get work or that secured is not according to agreement, he should have a claim against the agent, not only for the fee he has paid, but for the time he has lost and the incidental expenses and damages he has suffered. Wisconsin, New York, and California have provisions of this sort.¹⁵ With these changes in the law and with such provisions of the law printed in a language understood by the applicant, on the reverse side of the receipt or contract stating to

¹¹ Rule I, of "Rules Relating to Intelligence Offices," class 2—adopted by the Licensing Board of Boston.

¹² *N. Y. Laws of 1906*, chap. 327, sec. 5.

¹³ *Pa. Laws of 1907*, Act. No. 90, sec. 8.

¹⁴ *Me. Laws of 1907*, chap. 84, sec. 3.

¹⁵ *Wisc. Laws of 1899*, chap. 213, sec. 4; *New York Laws of 1907*, chap. 327, sec. 5; *California*, Law approved Feb. 12, 1903, sec. 3.

whom complaint of its violation should be made, some of the trouble could be prevented.

Such changes would, however, only reach the surface of the trouble. Good laws are difficult of enforcement. The opportunities of cheating the unsuspecting stranger are too great for the average man, anxious to make money, to withstand. Clearly then, because of the helplessness of the men, because of the interstate character of the work, and because of its social and industrial importance to the city and state generally, this class of workmen should be handled through the state Free Employment Agencies. The three Chicago offices have been established for ten years. They cannot, therefore, be said to be passing through an experimental stage. They should long ago have gained the confidence of employers not only in Chicago, but over a wide area.

It seems perfectly apparent that no man wants a person he expects to employ to pay a third man for the job if it is not necessary. When the state goes into any business it ought to be able to drive most competitors from the field. When it goes into a business and offers free service and charges its rivals \$50 a year for a license, the existence of about three hundred such rivals shows a curious situation. The amount of work done by these agencies is hard to determine satisfactorily. Reports from the three offices are made independently and show a very small percentage of those applying for work not placed. This is hard to understand in view of the fact that investigation showed that because the three offices are independently managed, the practice of registering at all three is common. Then, too, no report is made as to the number of times the same person has asked for and received work through these offices. Keeping in mind these facts, the figures are somewhat interesting. The first year of their existence there were 36,949 applications and 31,218 of these secured positions;¹⁶ during the year ending October 1, 1906 there were 46,487 applications and 43,333 secured positions.¹⁷

¹⁶ *Eighth Annual Report of the Bureau of Labor*, statistics of the Illinois Free Employment Offices, p. 13.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 72, 73, 76, 77, 80, and 87.

This was an average of 298 applicants a week at each office for the year 1906 and an average of 278 of these secured positions. The report for the past year is not yet available but the *Weekly Bulletins* which have been issued since July 25, 1908 do not show so high an average. For that week the average number of applicants at each office was 173, a most remarkable fact in view of the general unemployment, and the average number of positions secured, 115.¹⁸ Whatever the defects in this system of reports, and they are due primarily to the independence of the three offices, it is evident that the volume of business done in ten years has grown very little and that the offices do not feel the pressure, either of prosperous times or of periods of financial depression. This clearly indicates that the work is done in a perfunctory manner, probably in part a result of the serious defect in organization. With three independent offices there is no possibility of any large work. No one man is working at the general problem of unemployment and bringing the entire prestige of the state and its financial expenditures to bear on its solution. Worse than this, the superintendents are partisan appointees, whose claim to the office is political service rather than social intelligence and organizing ability. Centralizing the offices will do much, taking them out of politics will do more. Moreover, the work not properly a part of an employment office should be placed elsewhere. At present the superintendent of the south-side office has charge of the inspection of the private agencies of the city and enforces the law governing them. In such capacity he or his representative is supposed to visit the various agencies and inspect their registers. This gives him an opportunity to learn much of the employers who patronize the various agencies and he could in this way obtain much information of use to him in his capacity of employment agent. To use this information would be manifestly unfair; so he must choose between being a bad inspector or an indifferent employment agent. The man who possesses the qualities which make him a good superintendent of inspection is

¹⁸ *Weekly Bulletin*, No. 1. The average is about the same for the following weeks.

not apt to possess the constructive ability which is necessary to build up a strong state employment agency.

To sum up, then, this little study of the relation of the immigrant to the employment agencies of the city, it has been shown that so far as the immigrant girl is concerned she secures through them only hotel or housework, that she suffers from little or no financial exploitation, but that there is reason to believe she is in some moral danger. So far as the men are concerned, we found that the work offered is, generally speaking, seasonal and at a distance from the city, the fees are excessive, and the men are often sent out to work which does not exist or which lasts for a very short time. This reacts upon the city, for it makes Chicago the headquarters of what is truly an army of casual laborers who keep down the wages of the regular unskilled workers in the city. Worse than this, after experiences such as many of these men suffer when sent out of the city, it becomes increasingly difficult to reduce city poverty and congestion by distribution throughout the country and these disappointed seasonal workers become the material out of which a degraded working class is created.

The final remedy suggested for this situation is the reorganization and strengthening of the State Free Employment Agencies, but in the meantime certain results can be obtained by some modification of the present employment agency law. Those suggested are that the fees charged should be public and uniform, that there should be no division of fees with contractors, that statements containing detailed information about the work and the employer should be furnished the applicant in a language he can understand, that damages should be allowed when work is not secured or not as represented, and that fees should be promptly refunded when no work is secured or when it lasts only a short time. These reforms are asked not only as a protection to the immigrant, but to the community in which he lives.